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# The Dismal Battlefield: Mobilizing for Economic Conflict

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Scharfen, John C. *The Dismal Battlefield: Mobilizing for Economic Conflict*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 239pp. \$29.95

John Scharfen is a retired Marine Corps colonel. Having held a number of senior planning positions while on active duty, he later worked as a civilian national security analyst. Now a resident of Alexandria, Virginia, Scharfen has written and lectured extensively on national security affairs.

Scharfen seeks to "analyze the dynamics of economic conflict" within the context of total national forces (e.g., military, political, and economic), but he falls short of his objective. This book is, principally, a collection of observations, opinions, and incidents on a complex subject, leading to an uncertain conclusion.

The concerted application of a nation's economic strengths as instruments of national power can be viewed as conflict by other means.

Political actions may be measured and assessed. Military actions may be measured and assessed. The author's implied thesis is that a nation's economic strengths and capabilities can also be measured and assessed, then catalogued and positioned for "economic conflict," just as a logistician catalogues and positions ammunition and rations for military conflict. By stating that "there is no department, agency, or staff within the federal bureaucracy that has responsibility or is organized for the overall management of the economic instrument,"

the author minimizes the extensive involvement of the departments of State and Commerce, and most assuredly the National Security Council, in such policy matters.

One concedes the importance of military instruments of power being under the operational direction of a professional military officer corps, as one does that of the diplomatic affairs of states being under the operational direction of a professional diplomatic corps. However, whether or not the instruments of a nation's economic power, as distinct from the nation's military and diplomatic powers, can be collectively assembled under the operational direction of a vaguely defined bureaucracy is, at best, problematic. The author suggests tasking the Department of State to create policy, doctrine, and strategy for economic conflict. He then calls upon the academic and private sectors to produce plans and "provide augmentation teams to assist and advise during [economic offensive?] operations," just as, in the opinion of the reviewer, an engaged military force might "call up the reserves." What the author is ultimately proposing, then, is the centralized command and control of the nation's economy under the operational direction of a public bureaucracy, perhaps an empowered U.S. version of Japan's often-misunderstood MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry).

But surely, U.S. industry cannot arbitrarily concede management controls, oversight, or strategic planning to a government bureaucracy, absent an overriding threat to the nation. The Axis powers effectively brought U.S. industry into full partnership with other elements of a World War II grand national strategy, mandating extraordinary government controls as befitting the threat. Centralized production

planning, allocation of resources, price controls, and so on, did not continue after the war's end. In time of peace, those wartime controls would be unconstitutional infringements upon public freedoms, especially upon the conduct of private enterprise.

*The Dismal Battlefield: Mobilizing for Economic Conflict* is not, therefore, recommended for the student of international affairs. A notable body of literature already exists on the subject of economic conflict, economic sanctions, economic warfare, and other related topics. See, for example: *Economic Warfare or Detente: An Assessment of East-West Economic Relations in the 1980s*, edited by Reinhard Rode and Hanns D. Jacobsen (Westview, 1985); Jagdish Bhagwati, *Protectionism* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988); Ravi Batra, *The Myth of Free Trade: A Plan for America's Economic Revival* (Scribners, 1990); William J. Gill, *Trade Wars against America: A History of United States Trade and Monetary Policy* (Praeger, 1990); George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan* (St. Martin's, 1991); John G. Clark, *The Political Economy of World Energy: A Twentieth Century Perspective* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and Michael Silva and Bertil Sjogren, *Europe 1992 and the New World Power Game* (Wiley and Sons, 1990).

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Yetiv, Steve A. *America and the Persian Gulf: The Third Party Dimension in World Politics*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995. 192pp. \$49.95

In the study of the Middle East, perhaps more than any other area of the world, the gaps between policy makers, international relations theorists, and area specialists tend to be very large. This book is, in part, an attempt to bridge these gaps, and happily, the attempt is successful; hence this book will be of interest to anyone in these various fields. Steve Yetiv, a political scientist at Old Dominion University (and a contributor to the *Naval War College Review*), brings both his detailed knowledge of the Middle East and his deep understanding of international relations theory to bear on the role of the United States in the Persian Gulf.

One of the distinctive features of Yetiv's approach is his emphasis on the role of "third parties" in international politics. What is especially remarkable about his use of this concept is his reversal of the way in which third parties are often viewed. Much of the literature, for example, focuses on their roles as mediators or otherwise decisive forces affecting international conflicts. Yetiv makes the interesting twist of arguing that it is not only that the United States has had great effects on Persian Gulf politics but that the reverse is also true, and to a profound degree. The author uses a case study approach, examining a series of major events in the Gulf (the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq war, and the 1991 Gulf war) to show how each affected and changed the strategic position of even so powerful a third party as the United States. Among other things, he also makes the provocative argument that these events actually enhanced the strategic position of the United States while lessening that of the Soviet Union.

One of the reasons this book has special appeal is that it combines major theoretical